

SAFETY MESSAGE

Personal Safety is our #1 priority



Athlete's Foot, Compiled by USDA_APHIS_CCEP

Definition

Athlete's foot is a fungal infection that causes red, dry, flaking skin, sometimes accompanied by pain or itching. The condition usually occurs between the toes or on the soles or sides of the feet. In its acute stage, the infected foot exhibits blisters that itch or "weep." Athlete's Foot can spread to the toenails, causing chronic fungal infections. Often when a patient thinks the feet are only dry and cracking, Athlete's Foot is responsible for the problem.

Cause

Fungal infections like Athlete's Foot are often contracted in showers, gyms, dressing rooms, swimming pool lockers, or other warm, damp areas where fungus can thrive. The name of the condition comes from the fact that athletes spend the most time in these environments and therefore are at a higher risk of fungal infection.

Once fungal spores are present on the feet, they can enter fissures or sores and remain there to spread, unless the feet are carefully washed and thoroughly dried after exposure.

Athlete's Foot can spread from the toes to the toenails. If the patient touches or scratches the infection and then touches other parts of the body, the fungus can spread to fingernails or other parts of the body, including the groin or underarms.

Like any foot condition, Athlete's Foot is of special concern to people with diabetes and compromised immune systems who are more susceptible to developing infections that can lead to serious medical problems.

Treatment and Prevention

Vigilant foot hygiene can prevent Athlete's Foot. Daily washing of the feet with soap and water followed by thorough drying, especially between the toes, is important. Wearing dry, airy shoes and socks, not borrowing footwear from others, avoiding tight hosiery and [using foot powder](#) all help to keep the feet dry and infection-free. When using public showers or pool areas it is a good idea to wear protective shoes.

Once an infection has occurred, it is important to see a doctor, have the problem diagnosed correctly, and treat it promptly. Fungal infections can be stubborn and difficult to treat, and can become chronic. Treatment plans include prescription antifungal medications, either topical or oral, and continued attention to keeping the feet clean and dry.